

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

- 25X1 1. Ordinarily, after a person had been arrested by the Soviet security services, all materials indicating his criminal activities would be sent to the interrogation subsection or section of the appropriate organ of the MGB. The chief of the subsection or section would examine these materials and then pass them on to one of the interrogators for action.
2. Materials proving the criminal activities of an arrested person were considered to be either official or unofficial. Official materials in the MGB were those items which were not classified secret, i.e., records of interrogation, records of search, reports from the place of employment, autobiography, statements of various organizations on the activity of the accused, and material evidence in the case.
3. The following were classed as unofficial materials: the operational register on the accused, the case logbook, various agent reports, and the results of the security check at the place of birth and places of work of the arrested person. This type of unofficial material was not shown to the prosecutor.
4. After receiving the orders from the chief of the section or subsection to assume responsibility for a case, the interrogator was obligated to familiarize himself with all materials, to study them, and to prepare a tentative plan for interrogation and a questionnaire.
5. The interrogator first acquainted himself with the unofficial documents, carefully studying and comparing the information on the arrestee uncovered by agents, including statements which compromised the arrestee. After this the interrogator studied the official materials, recording any contradictions found between the first statements made by the arrestee and his later statements, and between the testimony of the arrestee and that of witnesses or agents. Contradictions were weighed and were entered in the record as possible lies. The interrogator also examined any letters.

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or photographs taken from the arrestee which might contain evidence.

6. After the interrogator had completed all this, he would formulate a tentative plan for interrogation, in which a general goal was set of "unmasking" the arrestee. In his plan the interrogator would consider the contradictions which had arisen during the study of the case and determine the course to be followed in eliminating them. The interrogator also indicated any necessity for examination of additional witnesses in the case to establish specific points, or for confrontation of the arrestee by a witness, or for additional investigation at the arrestee's residence or place of employment.
7. The interrogator would then write out the main questions which he intended to ask the arrestee at the interrogation. The questions were formed with a preconceived idea of what the answers were going to be. The interrogator would consider the possibility of "unfavorable" answers, and would, therefore, compose two or three variants of the questionnaire. The questionnaire would be devised in such a manner as eventually to drive the arrestee into a blind alley and force him to make a true confession.
8. Having completed this phase of his work, the interrogator would return to his chief and report with all the case material, including his own conclusions on the investigation and forthcoming interrogation. The chief would usually agree with the plan and questionnaire of the interrogator, making a few additions and deletions.
9. The chief of the subsection would then order the arrestee to a special cell where there was an internal agent (vnutrikamernyy agent). If an internal agent was not available, then the chief would designate one of the interrogators to recruit such an agent for the purpose of "enlightening the arrestee."
10. On orders from the chief, the interrogator would have the prisoner summoned to his office. Each interrogator had his own room which was suitably furnished with a large writing desk, perpendicular to which was another small desk. A chair for the arrestee stood two or three meters from the interrogator's desk. There were curtains on the windows, and on the wall the ever-present portrait of Stalin.
11. The first and most important interrogations began between 2100 and 2200 hours, and continued until 0300 or 0400 and sometimes even longer. Reveille for prisoners was at 0600, so that during the interrogation the arrestee was permitted to sleep two or three hours during a twenty-four-hour period.
12. The above was an account of the preparation of the interrogator for an interrogation in the event that agent data, however incomplete, were available which would aid in characterizing to some degree the prisoner's activity and conduct. The availability, however, of such material in the interrogation practices of the MGB was rare.
13. It was often the case that in preparing a person for interrogation there were several examination records prepared by unqualified, ungrammatical case officers, which rendered the establishment of the presence of contradictions or even criminality in the evidence extremely difficult or even completely impossible. Therefore, very often upon arrival at prison the prisoners were put into a category of "detained" but not "arrested", that is, they were not formally and legally arrested because of the absence of any materials or evidence connecting them with criminal activities. In many cases, there were not even any agent reports on them. In this situation the fate of the detainee was not predetermined, but with good luck he might be freed by the organs of the MGB. This was why the full effort of the interrogator in this type of case was exerted to try to discover any sort of criminal activity, no matter how trivial, for the ex post facto formalization of the arrest.

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14. The method and conduct of the interrogation were determined by the individuality of the interrogator. The following was almost a law: the less intelligent and qualified the interrogator, the harsher and rougher was the interrogation. The increased nervousness of the MGB interrogator was explained to a significant degree by the absence of the evidence on the criminal activity of a prisoner. Shouts, abuse, and primitive threats helped the MGB interrogator conceal his inability to expose the "criminal" sitting before him. The interrogator would conduct the case in such a manner as to humiliate the prisoner as much as possible, and to convince the prisoner that his fate was entirely and completely in the interrogator's hands. In short, the interrogator would attempt to break the will of the prisoner to resistance, to self-defense, and to transform him into an obedient puppet, who would willingly sign any version of the interrogation.
15. The record (protokol) of the interrogation would be compiled by the interrogator in question and answer form. In the organs of the MGB great importance in the process of interrogation was attached to formal procedure. For example, if the prisoner should by a slip of the tongue have accidentally supplied false data to which he had signed his name it would be extremely difficult to convince the interrogator that he had simply made a mistake in his testimony. The interrogator would not believe him and would forward the record without corrections to the tribunal, where the prisoner would be tried on the basis of the mistaken evidence.
16. The interrogator was obligated to give the prisoner an opportunity to read each page of the record, which he had to sign. Nevertheless, not all interrogators carried out this obligation, since a reading by the prisoner would deprive the interrogator of the opportunity to alter the record to his own liking. With this practice in effect, prisoners frequently were ignorant of the details incorporated in the record of interrogation which they signed.
17. The use of physical force in the organs of the MGB was officially prohibited, and the beating of prisoners was not permitted. Numerous orders and directives on this subject were sent out by the central organs of the MGB. Not all interrogators, however, adhered to these restrictions, especially case officers of MGB organs located at the "periphery" (in the provinces), where prisoners sometimes were beaten in order to obtain testimony.¹ This type of activity was considered in the MGB in 1948 and 1949 to be illegal, and operational personnel guilty of the use of force were punished through administrative channels.
18. In very important cases where it was absolutely known that a prisoner was giving false information, especially in espionage cases, the chief of the section (otdel), with the verbal sanction of the chief of the directorate (upravleniye), assumed responsibility and force was used on the prisoner, i.e., he was unmercifully beaten. This application of force was repeated no more than once with each prisoner, since the MGB was afraid to leave traces of the beatings on the prisoner. Actually such beatings were rare, since everyone in the MGB knew that these "measures" might result in unpleasantness. For example, if the prisoner brought out in court that he had been beaten and forced to give false evidence wittingly, the chairman of the military tribunal would return the case to the MGB for further investigation. The decision of the military tribunal would include the statements of the prisoner on the beatings. The return of a case for further investigation was considered to be a serious reflection on the work of the MGB, and the Third Chief Directorate of the MGB might punish those guilty of administering beatings to prisoners.
19. Under such circumstances, the conclusion may be reached that within the central organs of the MGB (Directorate of Counterintelligence, oblast directorates of the MGB) only in exceptional cases did high officials assume responsibility and give sanction for the use of physical coercion.¹ Analogous measures in very rare instances were adopted in lower organs of the MGB (Army counterintelligence sections, city sections of the MGB), but the chiefs of these organs

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gave no legal sanction to administer beatings to prisoners. Such action was "illegal" and was usually investigated by the higher organs of the MGB.

20. The MGB widely employed a method of physical force no less effective than beating the prisoner: confinement in small detention cells. In every MGB prison there was a cell of very small dimensions, 1 x 1.5 meters, without windows. If, in the opinion of the interrogator, a prisoner was giving false testimony or withholding certain information from the interrogator, the interrogator would write a report to the chief of the directorate saying: "I request the confinement of such-and-such prisoner to the small detention cell. The prisoner has conducted himself in a provocative manner during his interrogation and has given false testimony." The chief would endorse the report as follows: "I sanction a term of 5 days." "According to law", the chief could not confine the prisoner to this cell for more than five days. The chief of the prison, on the basis of the endorsed report, would transfer the prisoner to the detention cell, where he would only have room to stand, and would receive only bread and water.
21. The stratagem in this case centered around the fact that the prisoner did not know for how long a period he was to be confined to this small cell.² Prior to incarceration the interrogator would threaten him, saying that he would remain there until he confessed his guilt. "You will rot there," the interrogator would say, "and if you think it over and decide to tell the truth then let me know through the jailer." The prisoner would remain in the cell without hope, not knowing that his confinement there was strictly limited to five days since his death in the detention cell would render the chief of the prison responsible. The prisoner, of course, would be unable to endure such conditions and therefore would beg to be reinterrogated. If the prisoner were to repeat his original testimony, or give false testimony, he would be returned immediately to the cell to serve the full five-day confinement.
22. The MGB interrogator had to adhere to the use of standard threats, for example, the threat to batter the prisoner into unconsciousness, the threat to ship him off to Siberia with no further trial or investigation, and the threat to persecute or arrest the prisoner's relatives. These threats were delivered in a menacing tone, and were followed with the slogan: "We of the MGB can do anything!" It goes without saying that most of these threats remained threats and in actuality were never fulfilled, with the exception, it is true, of infrequent cases in which the prisoner was beaten.
23. MGB interrogators very often made use of promises to the prisoner. For instance, the prisoner might be promised lighter treatment if he were quickly and frankly to admit his guilt. In espionage cases, prisoners often were offered a chance "to atone for their guilt in the eyes of the Soviet power" by performing tasks for the MGB. Added emphasis was furnished by the assurance that "the MGB can do anything -- either shoot or free a criminal." The promises, of course, were almost never fulfilled, but their effect on the prisoner was great. A not unimportant promise of the interrogator to the prisoner was food and cigarettes. This promise was fulfilled if the prisoner admitted his guilt or commenced to give truthful testimony.
24. All of the above-mentioned measures were designed to obtain a confession of guilt from the prisoner and to elicit a list of his accomplices. Exceptional insistence was placed on the delivery of the accomplices to the organs of the MGB. The appraisal of the work of the interrogator was determined by his unmasking of the prisoner and obtaining a confession of the criminal activities and by his obtaining from the prisoner a complete list of accomplices. This is why the interrogators of the MGB were so zealous in their demands on prisoners to name all persons who were also involved in criminal activity.

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25. According to the Criminal Procedure Code of the RSFSR (Ugolovno-protsessualnyy kodeks - UPK RSFSR) the interrogator was required, not later than two weeks after the arrest of a "criminal", to present to him the so-called Accusation Regulation (Postanovleniye o predyavlenii obvineniya). This law was strictly adhered to in the MGB. The process of presenting the prisoner with this regulation played a major role in the subsequent fate of the prisoner. The regulation was written on standard blanks in duplicate, one of which was sent to the prosecutor for control of the progress of the interrogation. In the regulation the interrogator would briefly state the essential points of the offense which incriminated the arrestee. There was a special column on the form in which the interrogator had to write, according to the statements of the prisoner: "I admit complete guilt", "I admit partial guilt", or "I do not admit guilt". The accused then signed the regulation. Immediately after the presentation of the regulation and the prisoner's signature of it, the interrogator would compile the interrogation questionnaire, the first question of which would be: "Do you understand the accusation and do you admit your guilt?"
26. This whole procedure played a major role and to a large degree depended on the adroitness of the interrogator since frequently the corpus delicti were almost completely lacking and the prisoner did not wish to admit guilt. In this case the task of the interrogator was, by the use of threats and arguments, to obtain an admission of partial guilt, no matter how trivial. The entire procedure was centered around the fact that the prisoner was unaware of the major role his admission would play, because in the absence of incriminating evidence, and if he refused to confess, he stood a one in ten chance of being freed. Ordinarily, the significance of such a confession was minimized by the interrogator, who would promise the prisoner a chance to prove his innocence during the trial if he would admit partial guilt.
27. It should be noted that the prisoner, during the period of his interrogation, was entirely isolated from the outside world. As such, he was forbidden to receive anything, and also forbidden to read newspapers and books.
28. In 1949 the Directorate of Counterintelligence (UKR) in Germany attempted to adopt the use of a lie detector in the interrogation section. A German cardiograph was obtained, suitable primarily for medical purposes. The apparatus was never actually used in the interrogations of the section. Several members of the UKR said that in the USSR such apparatus had been used with success by the MGB.³

[] Comments:

- 25X1 1. [] terminology as "periphery", "central", etc., is not always accurate.
- 25X1 2. [] prisoners often are aware of the time limitation.
- 25X1 3. Although the USSR is known to possess polygraphs (lie detectors), other
- 25X1 [] who are knowledgeable indicate that their employment by the MGB, at least during the period of this report, is highly doubtful.

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